

Charles Darwin Foundation

The slides of Alfred Croneis

- part I -



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Pictures by Alfred Croneis

Introduction and edition by Edgardo Civallero

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Charles Darwin Foundation
Library, Archive and Museum
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Galapagos Islands - Ecuador - 2023

Between late 1941 and 1946, the Galapagos archipelago hosted a U.S. military base. The base was part of a series of regional geostrategic moves to protect the Panama Canal during World War II, and was built following the signing of the *Treaty of Occupation of South Seymour* between Ecuador and the United States on January 24, 1942.

The site was located on Baltra (or South Seymour) Island, a dry, flat islet located north of Santa Cruz Island, across the Itabaca Channel. The native flora and fauna were virtually wiped out, and above their remains were built huts, sheds and other buildings; a harbour for large ships; and the first airport in the territory — now the main arrival point to the Galapagos.

The Americans did not limit their activities to Baltra. They built an aqueduct from El Junco to El Progreso, on San Cristobal Island, to supply drinking water; set up radar stations at Albemarle Point and Webb Cove on Isabela Island and on the south side of Española Island; and located several machine gun nests on the north coast of Santa Cruz Island.

Their presence was recorded in documents now preserved in U.S. military archives, and in the memories, stories and photos of the soldiers who were stationed at *The Rock* — their nickname for that isolated place.

A number of these photos, belonging to Dr. Alfred Croneis and taken in 1943, were donated by his widow, Catherine, to the CDF Library, Archives & Museum. Croneis appears to have served as a physician at the base on Baltra. His collection includes cardboard-framed slides, and the only metal-framed slides preserved in the CDF archive: frames sadly remembered for mismatching projectors with their excessive weight and thickness.

Among the contents are black & white images of life at the base, especially next to large airplanes, and color photos showing aerial views of different parts of the islands (taken from those same planes), and visits by troops to other parts of the archipelago.

The images are significant for showing the social interactions of the troops stationed on Baltra, their aerial reconnaissance work, and their attempts to get to know and relate to the territory and its population, beyond the narrow limits imposed by military life and the local geography itself.

Included in the present document are photographs from the Croneis collection that give an account of a tour of Santa Cruz Island by the soldiers and their officers, where they made contact with Icelandic settler Walter Finsen and some inhabitants of an incipient Puerto Ayora.

Finsen, who in the photos appears as an older man with a white beard, owned a farm on upper Santa Cruz; Georgina Rosamond Lloyd Taylor's travel diary (1938-39) provides some details about his life. The photos show him in what appears to be his home, posing with the military, reading a copy of *Time* magazine, and with what is possibly a box of cigarettes under his arm.

Among the photos of Puerto Ayora, there is one of the main pier, built by the first Norwegian settlers in the 1930s. And on it, a thick trunk of *matazarno* (a local, hardwood tree) that lasted on that site for several decades.

Unfortunately, none of Croneis' slides contains any annotated information on the frames. Therefore, one of the research tasks that remains open for the future is to identify all of the people who were captured in the snapshots, along with their locations.

3



23.17.0077

Croneis, Alfred. [*Beach*]. [Slide]. Baltra : Alfred Croneis, 1943. [N.d.] : col. ill. : 3 x 5 cm. DDC 986. Well preserved.



23.19.0119

Croneis, Alfred. [*Woods, highlands in Santa Cruz Island*]. [Slide]. Baltra : Alfred Croneis, 1943. [N.d.] : col. ill. : 3 x 5 cm. DDC 986. Well preserved.



23.19.0121

Croneis, Alfred. [*Woods, highlands in Santa Cruz Island*]. [Slide]. Baltra : Alfred Croneis, 1943. [N.d.] : col. ill. : 3 x 5 cm. DDC 986. Well preserved.



23.17.0075

Croneis, Alfred. [*American soldiers in Santa Cruz Island*]. [Slide]. Baltra : Alfred Croneis, 1943. [N.d.] : col. ill. : 3 x 5 cm. DDC 986. Well preserved.



23.19.0123

Croneis, Alfred. [*Woods, highlands in Santa Cruz Island*]. [Slide]. Baltra : Alfred Croneis, 1943. [N.d.] : col. ill. : 3 x 5 cm. DDC986. Well preserved.



23.19.0109

Croneis, Alfred. [*American soldiers and colonist Finsen in Santa Cruz Island*]. [Slide]. Baltra : Alfred Croneis, 1943. [N.d.] : col. ill. : 3 x 5 cm. DDC 986. Well preserved.



23.18.0088

Croneis, Alfred. [*American soldiers and colonist Finsen in Santa Cruz Island*]. [Slide]. Baltra : Alfred Croneis, 1943. [N.d.] : col. ill. : 3 x 5 cm. DDC 986. Well preserved.



23.19.0112

Croneis, Alfred. [*American soldiers in colonist Finsen's house in Santa Cruz Island*]. [Slide]. Baltra : Alfred Croneis, 1943. [N.d.] : col. ill. : 3 x 5 cm. DDC 986. Well preserved.



23.19.0114

Croneis, Alfred. [*American soldiers in colonist Finsen's house in Santa Cruz Island*]. [Slide]. Baltra : Alfred Croneis, 1943. [N.d.] : col. ill. : 3 x 5 cm. DDC 986. Well preserved.



23.18.0095

Croneis, Alfred. [*Coastline in Santa Cruz Island*]. [Slide].
Baltra : Alfred Croneis, 1943. [N.d.] : col. ill. : 3 x 5 cm.
DDC986. Well preserved.

KEEP OUT
NO SE PASA



23.17.0072

Croneis, Alfred. [*American soldier with Ecuadorian colonist in Santa Cruz Island*]. [Slide]. Baltra : Alfred Croneis, 1943. [N.d.] : col. ill. : 3 x 5 cm. DDC 986. Well preserved.



23.18.0094

Croneis, Alfred. [*American soldiers with Ecuadorian colonists in Santa Cruz Island*]. [Slide]. Baltra : Alfred Croneis, 1943. [N.d.] : col. ill. : 3 x 5 cm. DDC 986. Well preserved.



23.18.0097

Croneis, Alfred. [*Icelandic colonist Walter Finsen reading Time magazine in Santa Cruz Island*]. [Slide].
Baltra : Alfred Croneis, 1943. [N.d.] : col. ill. : 3 x 5 cm.
DDC986. Well preserved.



23.18.0090

Croneis, Alfred. [*American soldiers and colonist Finsen in Santa Cruz Island*]. [Slide]. Baltra : Alfred Croneis, 1943. [N.d.] : col. ill. : 3 x 5 cm. DDC 986. Well preserved.



23.18.0093

Croneis, Alfred. [*American soldiers, colonist Finsen and colonists' daughter in Santa Cruz Island*]. [Slide]. Baltra : Alfred Croneis, 1943. [N.d.] : col. ill. : 3 x 5 cm. DDC 986. Well preserved.



23.19.0113

Croneis, Alfred. [*Colonist Finsen, Ecuadorian and European colonists and probably Ecuadorian soldiers in Playa de los Alemanes, Santa Cruz Island*]. [Slide]. Baltra : Alfred Croneis, 1943. [N.d.] : col. ill. : 3 x 5 cm. DDC 986. Well preserved.



23.19.0116

Croneis, Alfred. [*American soldiers entering Academy Bay, Santa Cruz Island*]. [Slide]. Baltra : Alfred Croneis, 1943. [N.d.] : col. ill. : 3 x 5 cm. DDC 986. Well preserved.



23.19.0115

Croneis, Alfred. [*American soldiers arriving at Puerto Ayora's pier, Santa Cruz Island*]. [Slide]. Baltra : Alfred Croneis, 1943. [N.d.] : col. ill. : 3 x 5 cm. DDC 986. Well preserved.



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